

Texting V/S face to face communication: a critical study and the stress levels associated with it

Jhanvi Vaghani^{1*}

ABSTRACT

In the present age, Texting has become an inseparable and unavoidable part of one's life. It has modified the manner in which we communicate and socialize. It is not only the most frequently used tool of communication, especially among the youth, but also it has developed into a scale or a technique to feel collective. Thus ushering us to analyze its benefits and the extent to which helps us to choose this form of communication over others, namely, face to face. This paper critically analyses two methods of communication: texting and Face to Face communication, between males and females, comparatively and the stress levels associated with both if any. The study focuses on factors that direct people towards using either of these tools of communication and its consequences on their stress levels. The research conducted consists of 100 participants, 50 males and 50 females, aged 18 to 24, from diverse backgrounds. The research instruments used are questionnaires and the Perceived Stress Scale by Sheldon Cohen which has 10 items. The findings of this study depicted that the participants, both males, and females, are aware that texting is stressful as a form of communication and has more drawbacks for them compared to a face-to-face conversation and also the conflict between their preferences and actual usages. The study also aims to analyze how one form affects another in this aspect along with means through which the negative implications and stress be tackled, helping us use these convenient forms of communication to its fullest, in a healthy manner.

Keywords: *Texting v/s Face to Face communication, Critical study, Stress levels*

Communication and expression of one's thoughts, feelings and emotions are very essential for healthy and balanced functioning of mankind, whether it is for personal purposes or conversations or whether it is for professional and collective goals. Communication is the tool that helps individuals express, explore and reach their desired results. Over the years technology has changed the way social interaction takes place. In the past ten years we have seen the shift in the manner in which the forms of communications have changed; initially taking over as the professional world and then slowly creeping its way into people's personal conversations and thereby changing the entire way how people communicate. In the present times, it is almost near to impossible for us to think of communicating and interacting with the society without digital platforms like the 'primary; a form of communication for most of

¹Student, Dept of Psychology, Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

*Responding Author

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the people especially the youth. They have adapted and embraced this shift in communication from face to face to texting much more swiftly and quickly to connect with their peers, to explore and find like-minded people and develop relationships with people around them which helps them find compliance and validation, something that is important for people in this age group. According to the Pew Research Center, 72% of teenagers text regularly, and one in three sends more than 100 texts per day.(Amanda Lenhart.2010) Another found that 83% of people 18-29 years old used some form of social media daily (Duggan & Brenner, 2013).

This change in connecting with people and how instant it is has also made working professionals adapt it because of the amount of energy and efforts it saves it and how quickly things move forward that now it would be impossible to go back to verbal face to face communication especially looking at the pace at which everybody is embracing the world of texting. . Now if you think, besides the convenience it has brought along and reducing geographical boundaries it also brings along with it some implications that have a direct impact on other forms of in-person communication. In other words, texting has slowly taken over face-to-face communication and how each one of us engages in face to face communication on a regular basis. The decrease of in person's face to face conversations and the reduction in the ability of individuals in communicating in person and moreover their willingness to it has negative implications attached to like stress, anxiety, impatience, reduction in average communication skills of a teenager, change in language to name a few.

Since man is an extremely social animal and the people are responsible for directing man's behavior in all aspects, one cannot overlook the impact that changes in communication brings along. Connecting with people is extremely crucial for man's emotional, mental and social well-being and these fast-paced changes in this paradigm need to be assessed.

By definition, stress is any uncomfortable "emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioral changes. " Usually, stress on an everyday basis is a feeling that individuals experience when have when they are overloaded and struggling to cope with demands and expectations which may eventually lead to feeling strain and pressure. These demands are capable of having an impact in other areas of one's life such as financial needs, work, relationships, and other situations, but anything that poses a real or perceived challenge or threat to a person's well-being can cause stress. Stress spills into our personal lives in many ways, affecting the quality of our close and intimate relationships. Generally, when people get stressed they get distracted and are less affectionate, they cannot make time for a lot of quality time resulting in the distance between partners. Stress might bring the dark side of people where they showcase their worst traits, which might lead to the withdrawal of their significant other as well'' (Gordon, September 2017)

Anxiety is a stress emotion (Endler &Parker, 1990) characterized by feelings of "unsettling anticipation'' and "uneasy suspense'' (Rachman, 2004). Like stress, anxiety can be classified by time period. State anxiety refers to the short term emotional condition of anxiety, whereas trait anxiety refers to the long term personality characteristic that describes an individual's potential for experiencing state anxiety (Endler & Parker, 1990).

Thus in this study, we aim to critically analyze texting and face-to-face, two different forms of communication and the stress levels associated with each.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A paper titled 'Impacts of Text Messaging on Adolescents' Communication Skills: School Social Workers' Perceptions' by Jacqueline B and Graham, surveyed how text messaging has affected adolescent communication skills. In their study, first-hand interviews were conducted with seven school social workers who analyzed the perceptions of adolescent communication with different groups of people in their lives for example friends, parents or teachers, along with advantages and disadvantages that texting brings in adolescent lives. Results derived from this study concluded that texting negatively affects adolescents' communication skills, especially with reference to face-to-face communication skills, bullying, and teasing. Social workers should be aware of the good and bad impact that texting has and how it certainly affects their social skills and development.

The paper 'Mobile Technology: It's Effect on Face to Face Communication and Interpersonal Interaction', by Lucas Lengacher, the study examined the question of how technology affects communication? This paper explores the possibility of how increased exposure to communicating pathways may actually lessen communication. The research shows that mobile technology is affecting communication in a negative way when it comes to sociability and face-to-face communication. Not only does mobile technology decrease social isolation it seems that internet usage can cause feelings of loneliness too.

A negative correlation between phone usage and approachability, initiation, and proximity in the context of communication, which did not support my hypothesis of, when phone usage increases relationship satisfaction will decrease. This study did support some of the other research I found. In-Kraut, Patterson, et. al's research which found that social ties are what helps people handle life stressors. It was also found that many people felt disconnected from others when they were on their phones. This may cause weaker social ties

In the paper, 'A comparison of criticism received face-to-face or via text message among young adults: does mode of communication matter?' by Drew Declerck, the researchers conducted a laboratory-based experimental paradigm to draw similarities between the effects of criticism provided face-to-face and via text message to a no-criticism control group, along with reviewing moderating effects of rejection sensitivity and rumination. A total of 170 emerging adults took part in an acute laboratory stressor followed by either: 1) text message criticism (n = 53), 2) face-to-face criticism (n = 58), or 3) no feedback (control; n = 59). Levels of self-reported stress and positive and negative affect were measured at baseline, post-stress-task, and post-feedback. The results from this study concluded that critical feedback via text message and face-to-face were related with significantly lower levels of positive affect compared to the control group (findings related to stress and negative affect were in the expected directions, but were non-significant). It was also found that criticism exhibited by means of text messaging can lead to negative emotional outcomes, and at levels near to face-to-face communication.

A study by Golden Hizli Sayar and Oguz Omay, 'Texting as a Tool of Communication', the author briefly examines the literature studying the manner in which texting affects relationships. Previous research supports that texting positively aids in maintaining relationships and build support with social contacts. Keeping in mind the amount of communication is done by texting, the present study proposes texting as a resource in case of conflict or unsatisfactory relationships and that it restructures the thoughts of individuals about their relationships. It also gives a feeling of closeness. Evidence supports that texting

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with positive and mindful content can be used as a means to derive and put to use more satisfying relationship outcomes.

A paper by Klein Murdock, Karla (2013) Texting while stressed: Implications for students' burnout, sleep, and well-being. The research aims at analyzing connections among interpersonal stress, text messaging behavior, and three indicators of college students' health and well-being: burnout, sleep problems, and emotional well-being. The results also hypothesized that increased rates of texting can aggravate the impacts of interpersonal stress on the above mentioned aspects of students' health and well-being. Subjects consisted of 83 first-year undergraduate students. Findings of hierarchical regression analyses showed that increased levels of interpersonal stress were significantly linked with compromises in the three areas of functioning. An increased number of daily texts was linked with more sleep problems. The number of daily texts moderated the association between interpersonal stress, burnout and emotional well-being; interpersonal stress was related with poorer functioning but at extreme levels of texting.

Research Gap

There is certainly a research gap on this topic thus not a lot of existing literature has been found. There have been a lot of studies on texting and addiction, sleep quality or technology and stress but research has not been done on how texting and face to face communication have an impact on stress levels or the ways people communicate.

Objectives

The purpose of the study is to

1. To examine participants usage in each form of communication and measure their stress levels.
2. To analyze what factors are leading to the negative implications attached to either form of communication.
3. To give suggestive measures to individuals to use texting and digital communication the most healthy manner.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample population taken for this study is from the regions of cities Ahmedabad, Bombay and Gandhinagar mainly. The age group selected for this study ranges from 17 to 23, all college going students, predominantly. The ratio of males to females has been kept uniform and have been selected at random regardless of their class, sex, and socioeconomic status. Questionnaires were distributed among 100 individuals, 50 males and 50 females, through physical forms. All the participants sampled were informed consents

Data collection

The required data was collected with the help of structured Questionnaire, the first part of the questionnaire recorded the details about the daily usage of cell phones as well as texting, the preferred form of communication in various situations, their preference in presence of comparative stress and anxiety levels of both and Any drawbacks that they find in both the modes of communication on a daily basis.

The second part of the questionnaire was a standardized instrument to selected to measure the stress levels of the subjects, which is The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen (1988) is the most popular and accepted used psychological instrument for measuring the

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perception of stress. The questions in the PSS ask about emotions and thoughts of the subject during the past thirty days. The test includes 10 items.

Data Analysis

H₁ :Texting as a form of communication causes stress.

H₂: Face to face as a form of communication causes less stress.

To test the above hypothesis, the perceived stress scale was used. The scores of the ten items were calculated for each item and then the total scores, for all the participants were segregated into three categories according to the manual, for perceived stress levels experienced by the subject; low, moderate and high.

Norm table for the scores of stress levels

Scores	Perceived stress levels
0-13	Low stress levels
14-26	Moderate stress levels
27-40	Higher stress levels

The results that were derived for this study were a little surprising. When asked, to these participants, ‘**which form of communication is used more on a daily basis by them?**’

As shown in Figure 1.0, **52/100** individuals claimed they used texting more on a day to day basis and when their corresponding stress levels were verified, **40 out of those 52** had scores above 27 thus **indicating higher stress** levels as shown in Figure 2.0

Figure 01.

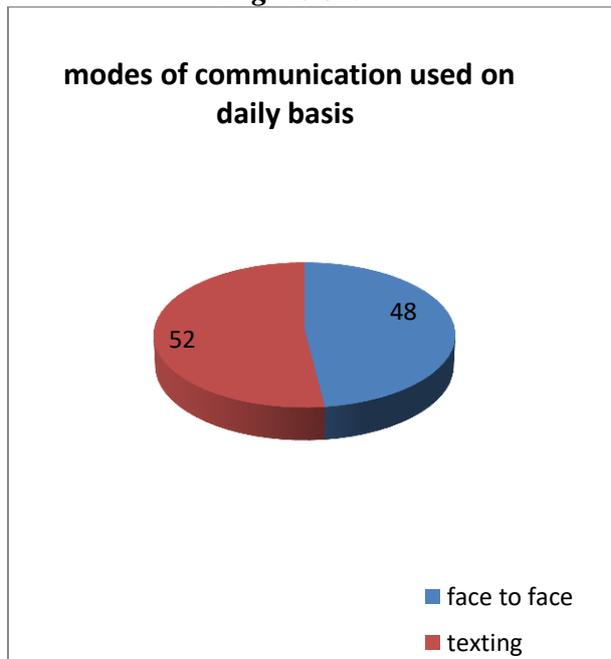
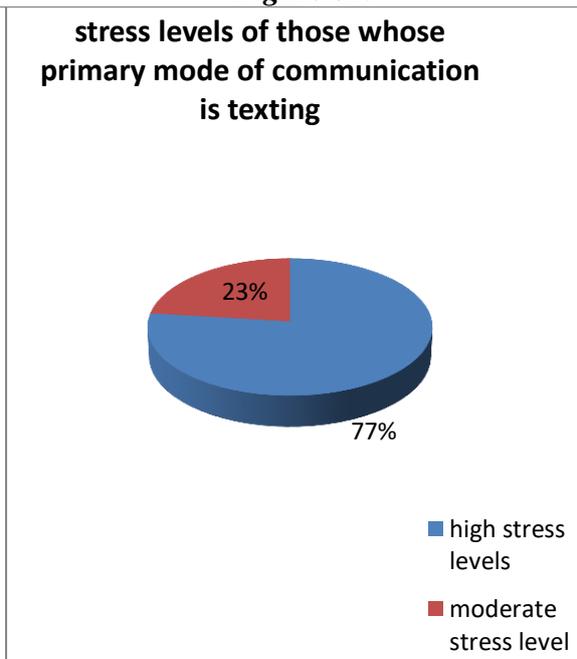
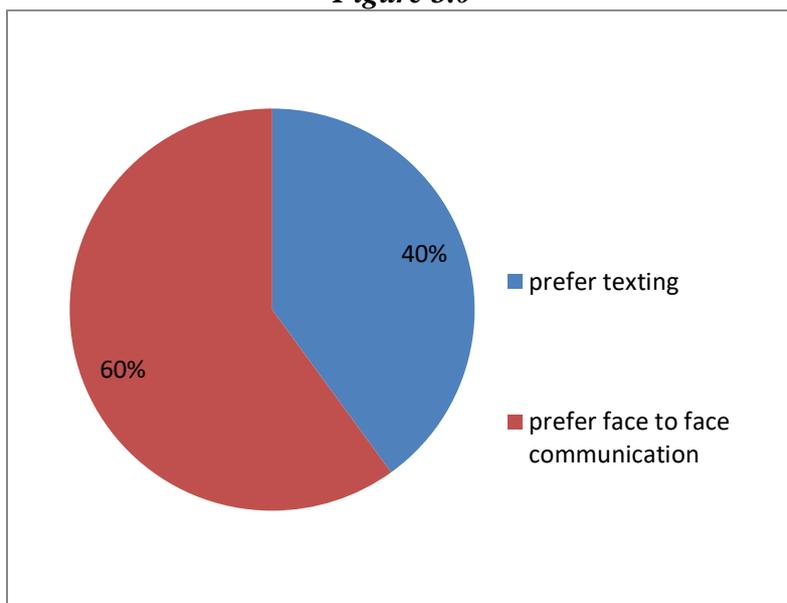


Figure 02.



Even more surprising results were when asked ‘**Pertaining to stress levels of both, what would you prefer?**’ Only **16** out of those **40** individuals said they preferred texting as shown below in Figure3.0

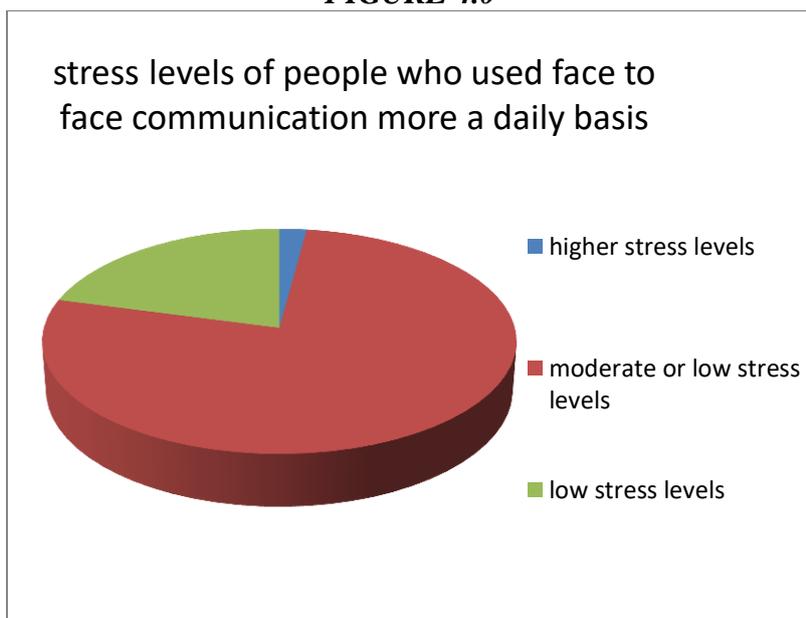
Figure 3.0



In contrast to the above data findings, when stress levels of those 48 individuals who use face-to-face communication more, on a day to day basis were studied, it was found that only one (1/48) individual recorded a score of 28, which falls into higher stress levels according to the PSS norm table, as shown.

The rest of which, 10/48 recorded lower stress levels and 37/48 recorded moderate stress levels.

FIGURE 4.0



Even more surprising was that out of these 48 individuals who use face to face communication on a daily basis, **only 3 of them have mentioned that they would prefer texting has their preferred form of communication.**

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the above data interpretations that on an average, people who use texting as their primary form of communication experience more stress levels and they are very much aware of the same and more than 50% of those individuals would like to engage in-person communication as their primary form of communication on a day-to-day basis. Having said that it can be clearly seen that people are very much aware of the limitations that this digital form brings along with it and even agree to the fact that they would not choose the same keeping in mind the stress levels associated to it.

This stress, most of the times stems from the causes like misinterpretations and misunderstandings that are caused because of lack of individual's tone, facial expressions, voice and the context of the conversation. When asked the subjects if they think any form of communication had drawbacks and if they can list any, 82 out of 100 recorded misinterpretations and misunderstandings. This not only prevents people from developing personal connections but also proves to be time-consuming as well as exhausting, both mentally and emotionally thus demanding more effort, energy and time in communicating clearly.

Then what is the reason why people still continue using it as their primary method of conversations? Apart from the convenience it brings along with saving time, reducing geographical boundaries, being able to talk to multiple individuals for this age group, this digital form has created a wall that can help them deal with social anxiety and without having to put their self-confidence to test in conversations that can be awkward or have conflicts. It is certainly easier to leave the conversation and detach yourself from it perhaps even more so when an individual is already engaged in some other activity while having this conversation.

It is very well known fact that teenage years and early '20s are the age where young adults are not very confident to deal with regards to their emotional fears and feel more vulnerable while expressing oneself which definitely translates in their conversations and the mode they select to communicate in. The advantages of the line that this form of communication has drawn especially making the user's think it is protecting their emotional vulnerabilities right from hiding behind your phone to not let people see lack of confidence, social anxiety, leaving conversations as per convenience, buying oneself time for thinking it through and then replying which in turn makes decision making easier, being able to freely express blunt opinions and thoughts without having to experience other person's non-verbal cues is something that really prevents them from adapting in-person communication or even to phone calls as their primary form of communication instead of text messaging which is certainly not possible in face-to-face communication.

In fact certain patterns suggest that relationship satisfaction and stability are linked to texting. In heterosexual relationships, women who text more frequently tend to feel happier in their relationships, and their partners do as well (Schade et al., 2013)

A 2012 research at the University of California at Berkeley concluded that sending texting not only elevated the individual's moods when they were feeling low but they also found medical applications: It was found that it can be constructively used to simplify the communication with personal doctors, aids research and can be an efficient and an easy way of collecting the patient's information. It is also used to offer support to at-risk or suicidal people through instant-response crisis texts.

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Having these advantages it is justified why this new digital method is taking over face-to-face communication in spite of the stress that it brings with it. It is also certain that text messaging is an immensely convenient and helpful tool of communication if the negatives are taken into consideration and the causation is well understood with regards to the stress associated so one can use it in an effective and a healthy manner.

Suggestive Measures

Clarity: One of the major drawback with text messaging is the misunderstandings and misinterpretations created by it. This can be tackled by making your texts more clear and trying to set contexts in a way that a person is able to make sense of it in spite of the tone, voice modulation and facial expressions being absent. The clear meaning should be delivered but with the right tone and contexts as to leave no room for misunderstandings and misinterpretations. On a more personal basis norms should be established for how texting should take place in a way that there is no room for misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Give yourself allowances: Constant texting can take over anybody's nerves, later developing a habit for instant gratification, impatience and mild increase in anxiety levels. Constantly not being available and fear of missing out is becoming more and more prevalent amongst the young adults today. Thus it is imperative to make sure that constant communication you're your phone shouldn't affect in person communication in one's life, thus making this time limited so healthy communication and relationship is maintained with people around you. It is important to be completely and mindfully be with people around you or completely engage in any task that one might be doing

Thus limiting the time you use texting especially when you can have face to face conversations with people around or just answering e-mails and text messages at a specific time of the day as it is important to take some space for one self, it is okay to not be available and on call 24/7.

Face it : At times it is better to have face to face conversations with people and in greater detail with ease. It is best to have delicate and doubtful conversations in person despite the discomfort it causes. Complex and awkward conversations are easier to do over texts but having these in person really leave a room for clarity and build or improve personal relationships. It is easier to have a healthy confrontation than avoidance in these types of situations.

Do not over do it: Since texts provide a longer period of time to the user to think and then reply, it is more important for the user to understand not to over-analyze the texts and dwell on it. Along with that over using or just using texting as the only form of communication isn't healthy, calling the person on the other end might also solve a few problems and help build a better connection or understanding.

Communication skills and language skills: Everybody already knows how text messages are taking over people's ability to communicate and talk effectively in person. The average social and communication skills are diminishing. It necessary to understand the importance of social and communication skills as well as of body language to develop and practice the same through any form of communication used. One should try and keep incomplete sentences, slangs and abbreviations limited to text messages only.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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